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**Title :** Escorting Strategies by Individual Male Humpback Whales on the Hawaiian Wintering Grounds

**Category :** Behavior

**Student :** M.A./M.S.

**Preferred Format :** Either Oral or Poster Presentation

**Abstract :** On the Hawaiian winter grounds, male humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) escort females both with calf and without, presumably seeking mating opportunities. Craig et al. (2002) demonstrated that females without calf have a higher reproductive potential than females with calf, and consequently females without calf tend to be escorted more frequently and by more escorts than females with calf. We investigated whether this trend would also hold for individual males sighted more than once over the winter season. Using fluke identification photographs collected in Maui waters between 1996 and 2001, we examined the degree to which individual males were consistent in the type of female they were observed escorting. One hundred seventy-nine individual males were sighted twice within the same season in groups of two or more animals. Males sighted the first time in a non-calf group were significantly more likely to be sighted the second time in a non-calf group than would be expected if males randomly associated with the females available ( $p < .005$ ). However, there was no trend for males sighted the first time in a calf group to be more often with a calf group on their second sighting. These findings confirm that escorting females with calves is not a preferred choice.